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RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO RURAL YOUTH.

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WHILE ORGANIZED RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES ARE AVAILABLE FOR RURAL YOUTH IN NORTH CAROLINA, THE AMOUNT OF PARTICIPATION BY THIS GROUP IS QUITE LIMITED. SOME OF THESE OPPORTUNITIES ARE PROVIDED THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF 4-H, SINCE A PRIMARY OBJECTIVE OF THIS ORGANIZATION IS THE DEVELOPMENT OF RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION. TO AUGMENT THE EFFORTS OF ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDING RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES, THE NORTH CAROLINA RECREATION COMMISSION PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING FREE SERVICES--(1) STUDYING AND APPRAISING RECREATION INTERESTS, (2) COOPERATING IN THE PROMOTION AND ORGANIZATION OF LOCAL RECREATION SYSTEMS, (3) PLANNING AND FINANCIAL ADVICE, AND (4) TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR RECREATIONAL PERSONNEL AND FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF APPROVED RECREATION STANDARDS. TO UTILIZE FULLY THE ESTABLISHED RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES, TWO MAJOR NEEDS WILL HAVE TO BE SATISFIED--(1) A GREATER AWARENESS OF THE EXISTING RESOURCES ON THE PART OF ALL CONCERNED, AND (2) THE MOTIVIATION OF YOUTH, PARENTS, AND LEADERS AS TO THE VALUE OF PARTICIPATION IN RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23-26, 1967, WASHINGTON, D. C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U. S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (ES)

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Special Session on Quality of
of Living for Rural Youth

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NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE
ON RURAL YOUTH
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RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE TO RURAL YOUTH

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OVERVIEW OF PRESENT STATUS

In preparing this assignment, an attempt was made to make a rough inventory of some of the recreational and cultural facilities, programs, and services available to rural youth in North Carolina. The inquiry included personal interviews with representatives of public and private agencies who have recreational and cultural development of youth as one of their primary objectives. Reports of related studies, reports, and literature were also reviewed and analyzed. Some of the highlights which seemed prominent from three groups are presented to you at this time. These groups include the North Carolina Recreation Commission, 4-H, and the North Carolina Area Development Associations. We may take this report as a case of one particular State with hopes that it will be illustrative of what may be the situation found in other States.

1. North Carolina Recreation Commission.

It should be noted here that this Commission was created by the North Carolina General Assembly in 1945 - the first of its kind in the nation. Many other States have followed this model. It provides recreation consultation services to public, private, and commercial recreation interests throughout the State. I feel that this is of particular importance here in that this Commission is a resource which is available to both urban and rural residents and groups. It has no regulatory nor control function, nor does it have funds for local grants in-aid. Its services are rendered upon request without charge. Such Statewide services include: studying and appraising recreation interests; cooperating in the promotion and organizations of local recreation systems; and advising them in the planning and financing of recreation programs; also, providing training and helping to establish and promote approved recreation standards.

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Of the forementioned services, it appears that our rural recreation leaders are most likely to be using these: training programs; workshops; institutes, and publications provided by the Recreation Commission.

According to data revealed in this Commission's 1967 Biennial Report, one finds that with the exception of four, every municipality with populations over 7,000 in the State has a legally established annual operating recreation department, i.e., programs approved and supported by local governmental units. On the surface this sounds good, and certainly we are proud of this achievement, but when one examines and analyzes the latest N. C. Population Census of all incorporated and unincorporated places of 1,000 or more2/, he is likely to see a rather distressing picture in so far as the large proportion of places under 7,000 which, by definition, would be categorized as rural. An analysis of this data shows that the places over 7,000 having a legally established annual operating recreation department represent only 8 percent of all incorporated places, while the rural sectors with populations less than 2500 which make up more than three-fourths (78%) of these places do not have legally established annual operating recreation departments. Thus, one sees an extremely wide gap existing here between places with legally established recreation departments and places without such departments. In recognizing this gap, however, we must not overlook other recreational and cultural resources which may be available to rural youth in such localities, such as: 4-H, YM and YWCA; Boy and Girl Scouts; Boys Clubs of America; FFA; Community Development Clubs; religious recreation; industry and private recreation clubs. For this report, however, the extent of which rural youth are actually participating in such groups will only be given for 4-H. It is appropriate to note at this point that a comprehensive recreation study in North Carolina is now underway. This study is being coordinated by the N. C. Recreation Commission and the State Planning Task Force, and will be completed by January 1, 1968. This particular study will feed in the demands and standards as identified in public, private and industrial recreation offerings and needs of all counties and cities.

2. <u>4-H</u>

In preparing this assignment, it was mentioned earlier that I talked to several persons with rich experiences in various phases of recreation. One person made this statement, "Other than those provided by 4-H, planned recreational and cultural opportunities for rural youth in North Carolina are about nil." Some of you may have the same notion about your own situation back home, but no attempt is made here to argue the gentleman's view. However, since recreational and cultural development is one of the primary objectives of 4-H work, I would like to share with you a few of the things which have and are being

done through special planned efforts aimed toward developing and providing recreational and cultural experiences for rural youth in North Carolina. It seems appropriate that you first be given this background information: Today there are over 996,000 youth 9-19 years of age in the State. More than 80,000 youth participated in 4-H or youth work during 1966.3/ Rural youth make up more than 85 percent of our total enrollment. (54,000 enrolled in clubs; 24,000 not enrolled were worked with; while more than 2,000 older youth not in 4-H were worked with)

(1) In addition to the regular 4-H camping program, <u>special opportunity camping</u> is provided for disadvantaged youth from low socio-economic groups. These kids (more than 500 last summer) spend week-long periods at the 4-H camps where they take part in planned program activities designed to further develop them socially, culturally, and physically, such as: swimming, crafts, social graces, grooming, dancing, etc. For most of them, it is their first experience away from their everyday environment and the results have been heart-warming. There is evidence that they did develop poise, confidence, and leadership qualities, and they have told many others about their experiences.

(2) In 4-H work, recreational projects are provided which are structured to add to the cultural and recreational enrichment experiences of youth. Here the youngsters, through counsel from Extension Agents and voluntary leaders, participate in suggested activities related to social recreation; music and drama; arts and crafts; sports and outdoor recreation; folklore, etc. Certain requirements are necessary for satisfactory completion of this project, and we are proud to say that there were <u>almost</u> 5,000 completions of projects in this area during 1966.

(3) <u>Operation Expansion</u> is an experimental effort which was initiated last year for purposes of using new approaches in reaching additional young people.4/ The approaches were developed around special interests and local leadership. Some results: (1) New and experienced 4-H leaders (636) were recruited and trained so that they would be better qualified to serve. (2) Special interest groups were formed for boys and girls who had no particular desire to join a 4-H Club, but who did have a particular area of concern, which resulted in

forming special interest groups, such as: recreation groups, horsemanship groups; crafts groups; and weekend camping groups, etc. (3) New audiences were reached, such as, mentally retarded children, and unreached disadvantaged youth, etc. In this particular expansion project, program aides or work - study students assisted Extension Agents in organizing and conducting recreation programs on the county level in disadvantaged areas.

Perhaps some of the greatest values resulting from this project have been: proof that tradition can be broken (some felt that the only way to belong to 4-H was by enrolling in a 4-H Club; that larger numbers of boys and girls are interested and are taking part in 4-H regardless of economic level or place of residence; that other agencies were used in accomplishing the objectives set forth. There is no doubt that education experiences can be provided through special interest groups or short-term projects of the kinds mentioned.

(4) Without going into any great detail, I would like to mention here some other 4-H activities provided which lend themselves to recreation and cultural development of youth. These include: State 4-H Week; Wildlife Camp; International Farm Youth Exchange (inbound and outbound); Forestry Camp; National 4-H Congress, etc.

Thus, we see that there are many varied and continuing projects and activities aiming toward recreational and cultural development even though 4-H work in North Carolina is reaching only a relatively small proportion of the rural youth population of 4-H age.

3. North Carolina Area Development Association.

There is a Statewide program in North Carolina called Area Development wherein groups of counties are organized around trade centers for the purpose of developing needed resources.

- Travel and recreation is one of the major program divisions of the 12 Area Development Associations in the State.5/ Here, efforts are made to plan for and to promote facilities (lodging, recreation, eating) that will bring as many people as possible from outside into the area, as well as to provide facilities for the convenience and needs of the people within the area. Tourists from other States

contributed $345,000,000 to the economy of North Carolina in 1965.6/ Travel alone in our State is the third major source of income, and the potential of travel and recreation combined for the State as a whole is very great.

- In many areas at the present time, historical values have become a major part of the objective on travel and recreation.7/ For example, many sections of the State are rich in history and love and legend, and they are interesting attractions which have strong links with the past. North Carolina was one of the 13 original colonies, and it is tremendously endowed with existing historical sites and attractions.

Examples: Cape Hatteras National Seashore, the first such National Park Service recreation area in the United States. Kitty Hawk, the "birthplace of aviation," and the Wright Brothers National Memorial. Still another example is the outdoor drama, "The Lost Colony," the story of the first English settlement in America - given at Manteo from June - August. I could go on and on pointing out historical sites and attractions in terms of their potential value in enriching the cultural experiences of our rural youth, but it seems to me that one of our primary concerns here is: To what extent do the rural youth know about them, and, in fact, to what extent are they being exposed to such resources through "on the spot" visits or tours? According to a study made in April of this year in Eastern North Carolina, it was found that "The area is endowed with uniquely developed sites and facilities which are relatively unknown, in many instances, even to local citizens."8/ This finding is further supported by those of another study which reveals that, "in spite of the region's abundant recreation resources and potential, very few facilities are available to the average resident... There is a pressing need for both municipal and county recreation facilities and programs.. . It is sad but true that the area is rich in recreation resources but poor in providing the facilities and services that the local people need to enjoy of their heritage."9/ These findings are self-explanatory. To me, they suggest the need for parents, local leaders, and others working with rural youth to become aware of these resources themselves, i.e., if they don't already know, and in turn, set up the necessary machinery to motivate and to get the youngsters into these historical places through actual visits so that they may derive some of their educational,

recreational, and cultural benefits. Of course, in this connection, one must not overlook the fact that it does cost money to visit these places, and that with the large proportion (37 percent) of North Carolina's rural families falling in the low income group, this could be a part of the problem. Our State is still predominantly rural - 40% urban, and 60% rural (42 rural non-farm and 18% rural farm). As is true in most predominantly rural places, the people suffer from low educational levels. Thus, it will take the combined efforts of many agencies and groups before a significant number of these rural youth can really take full advantage of even the existing resources and facilities which we know can contribute to their cultural development.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

In this presentation, I have attempted to give you a rough view of some of the recreational and cultural opportunities for rural youth in North Carolina, using information from the North Carolina Recreation Commission; 4-H; and Area Development groups. It was mentioned in the out-set that this report might be taken as a case of one particular State and that, hopefully, it would be illustrative of what may be the situation found in other States.

Based on the information given, the situation may be summed up in this manner:

1. Organized recreational and cultural opportunities for rural youth do exist, but participation in such activities is quite limited from the standpoint of the total rural youth population.

2. In many areas at the present time, existing recreational and cultural resources are relatively unknown to local citizens; moreover, they are not available to the average resident. In this same connection, many rural youth are children of parents with low levels of education and low levels of income which could serve as barriers from the standpoint of lack of motivation to participate, and/or lack of money which is necessary to participate in some instances.

3. Some modification of traditional approaches used in providing recreational and cultural experiences for rural youth has proven to be highly valuable through use of more practical and more imaginative approaches.

4. Recreation and travel as a means of boosting the economy is viewed with great significance and apparently has tremendous potential as a source of income, particularly from people outside the area.

5. Provision of recreational and cultural opportunities for rural youth will more likely be achieved through cooperative efforts of many agencies rather than individual ones.

In conclusion, it may be pointed up that some of the major needs include these:

- Greater awareness of the existing resources on part of the youth themselves, their parents, and all leaders working with rural youth groups.

- Motivation on part of the youth, their parents, and leaders as to the values of participating in recreational and cultural experiences.

- Recognition on part of elected officials, educators, churchmen, rural leaders, and others, as to the importance of recreational and cultural opportunities in the development of young people; also a continuing commitment from these leaders themselves to do something concrete about the situation such as, providing vigorous, varied, and continuous programs. In other words, when a community is aroused to the importance of organized recreation and its citizens understand the significance of the program and the value of effective areas and facilities, all under good leadership, maximum results may be expected.

Mrs. Minnie M. Brown

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